

**FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY IN NEWTON
OPERATIONS COUNCIL MINUTES
March 11, 2015
Alliance Room, 7:00 P.M.**

~ The meeting was called to order at 7:07

Present: Susan Bartlett by phone, Jeannie Chaisson, Judy Curby, Laurel Farnsworth, Andrea Kelley, Anne Hess-Mahan, Rowan Van Ness. Guests: David Morocco for the Annual Budget Drive and Becca Lozinsky, youth representative from the Board of Trustees.

Covenant

As we, the members of this Council and staff, gather to serve this congregation in leadership, we commit to ourselves and to each other: to be present and prepared for the work of this meeting; to listen well and contribute respectfully; to balance both our short and long-term visions with fiscal responsibility; to support the decisions of the Council; to uphold the democratic process; and to lead with goodwill and faith in the work we can accomplish together.

Invocation / Chalice Lighting: Laurel did a reading from the hymnal.

~ **Approvals:** All

- Minutes: Jeannie moved to approve January and February minutes. Approved unanimously.

~ **Annual Budget Drive:** David Morocco spoke for the ABD committee. Parking is still an issue at pledge parties, due to snow piles. Also, potholes are all over town.

They will get stewards in action after the pledge parties, as they are still encouraging people to sign up for pledge parties. Newcomers will be invited to pledge parties. David suggested that the Lay Minister monthly notification include a description of what the Lay Ministers do, which would be especially useful for newcomers.

David has no numbers yet on how the pledge drive is going monetary wise. He points out that many congregants had unexpected expenses due to the heavy snowfalls, leaks and roof collapses.

David gave Ops members and the Assistant Clerk ABD pledge forms, to either fill in and return immediately or to mail in.

Ops Council members thanked David for his work on the ABD.

~ **Staff update: Rowan**

RE circles:

The RE Justice Circle met to collaborate and incorporate more social justice in RE. Topics

included communicating better about opportunities for families to get involved in justice activities outside of RE on Sunday mornings. Additional meetings are scheduled, to explore action on Earth Day and the Mother's Day Walk for Peace. Tina Chery will help run RE that morning and the 2nd collection will go to the Mother's Day Walk for Peace.

Planning for next year:

The Curriculum Circle is looking at tweaks for next year's curriculum.

Adult OWL will be offered next year. They would also like to get training so FUSN can teach owl to 5th graders. The OWL sections will be age appropriate. For example, 5th grade will include issues of respect and appropriate touching; Coming of Age will look at dating. OWL is an 8-week course. The Board expressed its support for Adult OWL as a priority.

The Youth Service is this Sunday. The Youth Coffee House was successful last weekend.

The Board will set up a committee to search for someone to fill a Membership Coordinator position. A realistic hire target date might be this summer or fall. Laurel asked if we could be losing a pool of applicants in the meantime. Rowan says DRE positions are just going up now, and she thinks the timing is good to search for the Membership Coordinator now. The Board intends to communicate to the congregation about the position. Becca affirmed that someone is working on it.

~ Mandy has said she cannot continue as Youth Coordinator for next year. Rowan and Mandy will look for a replacement.

~ Laurel asked Rowan to explain "Faithify": Rowan said it's an initiative launched last year, kind of like Kickstarter for UU initiatives. A UU group comes up with a project idea, explains it, and seeks to raise funds. Funds are not collected until the goal is met. Payments are by credit card. Examples of Faithify projects: a Youth Group to go on a trip; 7 congregations on the South Shore collaborate to hire a shared Youth Group Coordinator; and Rowan's UU household want to set up a second UU group house.

Laurel says FUSN hasn't yet worked out procedures for collecting payments by credit card. She said the Board feels it's an Ops Council issue. Jeannie raised several questions: What percent does FUSN lose to cc fees? How can FUSN keep track of who's paying how much for what purpose. Something like PayPal for UUs is needed. Rowan's own contribution fee was 3.25% plus 30 cents per transaction. The giver can choose if those amounts come out of the donation or if the recipient covers them. Laurel feels a joint committee should work on this issue of credit card payments. Dan Brody, Peter Farago and Urban Larson have been discussing it. Rowan would be interesting to learn if any other congregations are using credit card payments. Andrea asked where the 3.25% goes. The answer is to be determined...presumably to the credit card company.

Laurel reached Susan by speaker phone to engage her at this point.

~ **Report on prior Board of Trustees meeting:** Andrea

There was an executive session regarding hiring a Director of Lifelong Religious Education. They approved a new member; approved minutes; voted on GA delegates; and heard the Minister's and Rowan's updates.

There was an update on the Developing Leadership team on a variety of issues, such as how it will coordinate with the Nominating Committee. They have a 3.5 page outline so far. Bill Horne will coordinate between the 2 groups, which will be fully independent in 2017. They feel that leadership development is a spiritual growth opportunity and are looking at roles new people can take beyond "regular" leadership positions, such as Board and Ops members and committee chairs.

They want to start gathering names from leaders and from congregants, as to who might be [on the team of 4 or 5 people?] [leadership candidates?]. They would like to be able to rank applicants by April 4, which is the next BOT meeting.

Rowan affirmed that FUSN wants to avoid people feeling stuck or burned out in leadership roles. Andrea reinforced thinking of leadership in a broad sense, as a spiritual function.

Laurel sent the outline by email to Ops members. They ask for suggestions of names.

~ The Board also discussed common themes from the small group meetings held several weeks ago, regarding Meghan's departure. Not all groups submitted summaries, but the Board gleaned several themes.

- polyamory
- tolerance; how young families feel; whether one's relational preferences are choice or pre-determined
- Erin's role
- a suggested by-law amendment
- full-disclosure - more facts would diffuse confusion
- how will this issue impact FUSN in the areas of emotion, how to disagree, diverse opinions, a sense of loss, distraction from other matters
- where to go from here: are there action steps to take to continue the healing process
- education possibilities: adult ed: can it be implemented immediately? next year? How to be part of a community when members hold different views; Should there be group discussions or learning about different family structures and differences and diversity overall. Some were concerned about leaving this issue till next year.

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Rowan will bring some ideas to the RE Committee for their input. Bobbie will make a list of additional themes. While the small group process was intended to focus on listening and hearing, some saw the groups as wanting to generate action steps.

Lesley Sneddon will coordinate the effort of how to put out the Membership Coordinator position. Laurel feels Adult RE will not likely satisfy those who are dissatisfied, as they are unlikely to

attend RE. This topic will be discussed at the joint Ops-Committee Chairs meeting this Saturday. Anne asked if the OPs Council should provide a response. Laurel feels it's a policy issue, rather than an operations issue.

~ Updates:

- **Financial:** Judy

Laurel provided copies of the monthly report. It is confidential, due to salary information.

- **B&G:** Laurel:

Clearing FUSN's roof cost \$11,000, so the landscaping/snow plowing line is way over budget. If necessary, the funds can be taken from major maintenance. FUSN also has bent gutters and a leak in back of the sanctuary next to the Highland Street door, which needs masonry repair. She needs to get someone to look at repair costs, with the understanding that they may need to go into roof fund. Anne asked if insurance will cover any of it? Laurel said not, and FUSN has \$10,000 deductible.

At this point (February), utilities have not gone significantly over budget.

~ RE budget: Rowan

Most line items remain the same as last year.

Changes: The nursery line includes a request to have 2 paid adults, vs. 1 paid and 1 volunteer adult; and to keep 2 paid youth at the same cost. The Adult RE budget increase is due to moving the cost of the staff to allow the spiritual parenting group to continue to have child care. The reduction in the line item for Special Events & Worship is because some of those functions (Halloween, New Year's Eve, Fun Nites) will return to Membership vs. RE. Religious events will remain in the RE budget: Rosh Hashona, Christmas, Passover.

Andrea wonders if more funds need to be allocated to OWL, per last night's Board meeting and/or toward Meghan follow-up issues in RE.

Rowan will forward the proposed RE budget to Karen Bottar and Brian Gill of the Finance Committee. Judy asks if Adult RE needs an increase, due to increased OWL training.

Laurel said Jud is proposing to update Ethernet at FUSN. She's working on getting an estimate. Judy said Fran is working on where FUSN pledge payments stand at this point. Judy asked Peter Farago for assistance, as the new system is challenging.

Susan raised the issue of the upcoming joint Ops-Committee Chairs meeting, Saturday 12-2. Several people have indicated they are coming, but she hasn't heard from everyone. There will be perhaps up to 15 people. Food for the meeting was discussed and duties shared.

Laurel asked for update on the B&G rental agreement, a work in progress. Andrea said meetings had been snowed out and will be rescheduled.

Laurel still needs to complete the insurance form, to return to the insurance company. She also reported that there was a successful meeting on solar panels, which included guests from outside FUSN, resulting in increased awareness of FUSN in the community.

Susan: Family Access (formerly Newton Community Service Center) received some funds from FUSN, perhaps from the Alternative Gift Fair, and it isn't known who provided the funds. Judy does not see any checks cut from the Alternative Gift Fair to that organization. It is currently a mystery. Judy said maybe the organization thinks it's from FUSN, because Gayle and Judy's personal gift to the organization included a thank you for allowing FUSNites to park in their lot.

Susan will set up a meeting with Santander Bank, at their suggestion, concerning the ongoing parking issue.

The Personnel Policy Committee will come to next month's Ops Council meeting.

~ **Thank yous:** Carol Reichert and Laura Bishop for the Youth Coffee House. Bill Horne for coordinating the small group discussions around Meghan's departure.

~ The meeting adjourned at 8:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Schwartz,
Assistant Clerk